

CHRISTMAS EDITION

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CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The bellies of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearthstones of a continent
And made folorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!"

H. W. Longfellow

This poem of one of our greatest American poets seems peculiarly appropriate to the conditions that obtain not only in America but in the whole world at this Christmas season of 1920.

The general opinion is that the poet is impractical, a dreamer, an idealist; whose art is valuable only as it furnishes diversion from the hard, practical, prosaic things of life; furnishes recreation, amusement and the pleasure of beautiful visions of a world of beautiful ideals come true. This poem like many another shows that the writer had caught the really practical and practicable idea. The popular conception may be that there is "no peace on earth," but the poet had caught the vision of the truth and truth is always practical. "God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!" The so-called "practical" people seem to miss this truth; as well as its inevitable sequence that "The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail."

The poem was written during the dark days of the Civil War in our country. Those were the days when men lost their faith, for hate seemed to be triumphant and wrong entrenched in the seat of power. The message of "The Christmas Bells," only a fanciful illusion; a dream of the idealist that could never come true.

These are the dark days which follow a great conflict which has involved practically all the nations of the world. True the awful holocaust of War has for the moment ceased, but the fires are still smoldering and human life is held lightly to day; a thing to be brushed aside without compunction if it stands in the way of sordid Desire, of Avarice or of Greed. Wrong and Injustice stalk arrogantly through the temples of civilization, usurping to themselves the seats of authority and power.

The modern Pharisees assert their self assumed superiority by dictating and legislating the personal habits and manner of life of other people; direct the servants of governments in the enforcement of their dictation and complacently assume that these things demonstrate their own virtue and cover, like the charity they have forgotten, a multitude of their own sins.

The modern "Judases" who betray alike the lives of the poor, the weak, the helpless and innocent children as well as the welfare of nation, state and community for paltry pieces of silver; thrive and fatten and flourish in the society of this and every other nation on earth. This is a cynic's view of existing conditions, but mark this—no cynic could have such a view unless these things were there to view.

What have Christmas Bells and the idealist's vision to do with such conditions as these?

What is Christmas evangel in such a world as this but a mockery and a delusion?

So say and so think a large portion of the "practical" world today. But we need the poet's vision to show us the truth to lead us to the real and truly practical.

The Christmas Bells bring us the message we need, they awaken us to the eternal verities: These conditions are the passing illusions, "God is not dead; nor doth he sleep."

The "woes" are not for the humble and persecuted, the victims of wrong and injustice, but for the perpetrators of these things

"The WRONG shall fail

The Right prevail

With peace on earth, good will to men."

Greetings



I always come to visit you at Christmas-time each year,
But every time I come along I miss a face that's dear;
Some girlie is a woman grown, some boy is now a man,
But while the crop of kiddies lasts I'll do the best I can.
To make you shout instead of cry,
And make you laugh instead of sigh!

A Christmas Carol

There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a Mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!

And the star rains its fire,
While the Beautiful sing;
For the manger at Bethlehem cradled
a King.

There's a tumult of joy
O'er a wonderful birth;
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is Lord of the earth;
Ay, the star rains its fire
And the Beautiful sing;
For the manger at Bethlehem cradled
a King.

In the light of that star
Lie the ages imperiled,
And the song from afar
Has swept o'er the world:

Every hearth is ablaze,
And the Beautiful sing;
In the homes of the nations that Jesus
is King.

We rejoice in the light
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the Heavenly throng:
Ay, we shout to the
Lovely Evangel they bring,
And we greet in his cradle
Our Savior and King.

J. G. Holland

A Christmas Carmen

Sound over all waters, reach out from all lands,
The chorus of voices, the clapping of hand;
Sing hymns that were sung by the stars of the morn,
Sing songs of the angels when Jesus was born!

With glad jubiliations
Bring hope to the nations!
The dark night is ending and dawn has begun:
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the sun,
All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!

Sing the bridal of nations! with chorals of love
Sing out the war-vulture and sing in the dove,
Till the hearts of the peoples keep time in accord,
And the voice of the world is the voice of the Lord!
Clasp hands of the nations
In strong gratulations:

The dark night is ending and dawn has begun;
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the sun,
All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!

Blow, Bugles of battle, the marches of peace;
East, West, North and South let the long quarrel cease:
Sing the song of great joy that the angels began,
Sing of glory to God and of good will to man!

Hark! joining in chorus
The heavens bend o'er us!
The dark night is ending and dawn has begun;
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the sun,
All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one!

J. G. Whittier

The great blessing, the great Christmas gift that the heart of the world yearns for is a true and world-wide peace—a peace that shall bind all nations together in the bonds of a common brotherhood in which there shall be no taint of envy, jealousy, avarice or hate. A brotherhood of nations in which none shall seek to take away from others what they have, but in which all shall work together to give to the others that which they have not. In which the standard of living and the opportunities for the development of the best in manhood and womanhood shall be equal in all nations.

A peace not of coercion arranged by a senate of representatives of the nations each trying to secure the most and the best, the high places and the chief emoluments for his own particular nation, but a peace which grows out of the hearts of all the peoples which shall express itself in "The chorus of voices" that shall "sing out the war-vulture and sing in the dove till the hearts of the peoples keep time in accord."

It may seem to be a peace that is as yet ages away; but yet it is the peace which each recurring Christmas season promises and we dare to believe, which each recurring Christmas season brings a little nearer.

Idealistic as it seems it is still the promise of Heaven to Earth and there are evidences which lead men to say with the poet, "The dark night is ending the dawn has begun."

It is a peace that grows from within the hearts of men and may never be brought about by fiat or decree. It grows as the nations each in its place clears out from within itself all elements of strife and discord and develops within itself good will among its own people.

No nation that has within its borders, factions and classes and castes can enter into this true peace of the world; such nations are as those who cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace."

They are as those who come not to find the "Prince of Peace" but "the loaves and fishes." What nation is ready in this respect, to enter into the true "peace of the World" today? Is our own America?

The wonderful peace draws nearer as the nations of the earth develop it within themselves. We have not as yet plumbed the depths of the significance of those words "The Kingdom of God is within you."

The Peace which the world yearns for is based upon absolute justice to all; a justice that is even handed, and with it a charity that opens the doors of opportunity for those unable to open them for themselves and that guards the rights and happiness of all alike. These things cannot be brought about by force of arms or legal enactment, rather they must come from the force of habit in the minds and actions of men out of the impulses of their own hearts.

There can be no true and permanent World Peace without a realization of a world Brotherhood of man and there can be no brotherhood of man without a recognition and realization of a Divine Fatherhood. It was that men might know God as Father, that the Christ came among men and therefore Christmas must ever be the promise, the assurance of the ultimate "Peace of the World."

The gift has been bestowed but it has not been taken by those to whom it is given.

When shall the world take the gift for which it yearns when shall it realize the "Peace" that is here?

In the light, and the joy, and the promise of the Christmas season may we not begin in our own homes, our own communities, our own lives prepare to enter into and help others to enter into this "Peace."

Let us seek not to be served but to serve, like unto Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. Let us give of ourselves in imitation of the Christ who gave his life that all men might have life. In a word let us in fact and in practice make the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the model and inspiration of our own lives; recognizing God as our father, men as our brothers. So shall "the Bugles of War blow the marches of Peace" and "All speech flow to music, all hearts beat as one."